

# IOWA BIRD LIFE

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Fall 1995 Volume 65 Number 4



IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

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Fall 1995

Volume 65, Number 4

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FRONT COVER: Least Tern egg and young at Midwest Power Ponds, Pottawattamie County, 29 June 1988. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.

INSIDE BACK COVER: Editorial Staff, Subscription/Membership Information, Instructions to Authors, Officers, Board of Directors, Standing Committees.

BACK COVER: Meeting Dates, Report Deadlines, Birdline, Materials Available.

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The IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION, founded in 1923, encourages interest in the identification, study, and protection of birds in Iowa and seeks to unite those who have these interests in common. *Iowa Bird Life* and *I.O.U. News* are quarterly publications of the Union.

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## EDITORIAL STAFF

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Institutions may subscribe to *Iowa Bird Life* for \$15 per year. Individuals may join the Iowa Ornithologists' Union according to the following membership classes: Regular (\$15); Regular as spouse or minor child of another Regular member without publications (\$4 first additional family member, \$2 each additional family member); Contributing (\$15 plus any additional tax-deductible contribution to the I.O.U.); and Life (\$300 as single payment or \$75 for each of four years). Members will also receive the quarterly *I.O.U. News* and are eligible to vote and hold office in the Union. Send subscriptions, membership payments, or address changes to Pam Allen, 1601 Pleasant St., West Des Moines, IA 50265.

## INSTRUCTIONS TO AUTHORS

Original manuscripts, notes, letters (indicate if for publication), editorials, and other materials relating to birds and bird finding in Iowa should be sent to the editor. Accepted manuscripts will generally be published promptly, depending on space available, with the following absolute deadlines: 15 November for the Winter issue; 15 February for the Spring issue; 15 May for the Summer issue; and 15 July for the Fall issue. Most manuscripts will be refereed. All material should be typed double-spaced or hand printed in ink on 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper. Authors should pattern their style after a current issue of the journal. If you want more detailed guidelines or advice regarding the appropriateness of your topic for *Iowa Bird Life*, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to the editor. Manuscripts may also be submitted on computer disk (Word 4.0 for Macintosh or compatible programs). Please submit one printed copy of the manuscript with the disk.

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## UPCOMING MEETINGS OF IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

May 1996, Burlington

May 1997-joint with South Dakota and Nebraska (planned)

## FIELD REPORTS

Anyone observing birds in Iowa is encouraged to report their findings on a quarterly basis to the Field Reports editors. Sample reporting and documentation forms suitable for duplication are available from the editor (send self-addressed stamped envelope to Jim Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014). An article describing the reporting process is also available.

Deadlines for receipt of field reports are as follows:

\*Winter (Dec, Jan, Feb)--3 March (W. Ross Silcock, Box 300, Tabor, IA 51653)

\*Spring (Mar, Apr, May)--3 June (Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246)

\*Summer (Jun, Jul)--3 August (James J. Dinsmore, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014)

\*Fall (Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov)--3 December (Thomas H. Kent, 211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246)

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

\*Deadline for receipt of reports: 15 January. For forms and instructions write: W. Ross Silcock, Box 300, Tabor, IA 51653.

## IOWA BIRDLINE 319-338-9881

The birdline is a recorded summary of interesting recent bird sightings in Iowa. At the end of the report you can leave a message and report recent sightings. Be sure to give your name and phone number as well as the location of the bird and date seen. Call in as soon as possible after sighting a rare bird. Jim Fuller checks the reports daily and updates the recording on Monday, so make sure Sunday sightings are reported by Sunday night.

## I.O.U. NEWS

Send items of interest for the newsletter to the editors (J. Hank and Linda Zaletel, 1928 6th St., Nevada, IA 50201).

## MATERIALS AVAILABLE

The following materials may be obtained by writing the editorial office (Iowa Bird Life, 4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014):

\*Order form for back issues of *Iowa Bird Life*: send self-addressed stamped envelope.

\*Field Checklist of Iowa Birds--1992 Edition: 6 for \$1.00, postpaid. Also available at annual meetings.

## REPORTING NEBRASKA BIRDS

Sightings of Nebraska birds, including those within the Nebraska portion of DeSoto N.W.R., should be reported to Loren and Babs Padelford, 1405 Little John Road, Bellevue, NE 68005. Formats for reporting and documentation are the same as for Iowa. The Nebraska Bird Line, available 24 hours a day, is 402-292-5325. Iowa birders are encouraged to report their Nebraska sightings to this number.

## ADDRESS CHANGES

Please send address changes/corrections to Pam Allen, 1601 Pleasant St., West Des Moines, IA 50265.

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## MEET TWO IOWA BIRDERS --

### REID AND PAM ALLEN

BOB CECIL

Reid and Pam Allen are one of those married couples who have grown so much alike that they almost look the same; they are both tall, slim, and athletic. But there are differences. Reid has a sense of humor so subtle that it sometimes slips by almost undetected, whereas Pam, although describing herself as "passive," exudes confidence and professionalism. This quality has served herself and the Iowa Ornithologists' Union well. She has served as Treasurer and member of the I.O.U. Board of Directors since 1991. Reid has served on the Board of Directors of the Des Moines Audubon Society. Together, they were honored with the Des Moines Audubon Service Recognition Award in 1994.

Reid and Pam's interest in birding evolved rather than ignited. Pam was the daughter of nature lovers. Even her earliest years were spent among field guides and walks in the woods and Girl Scout outings where not only birds but flowers, insects, and trees were identified. Reid showed early promise too. While a first grader, he drew a Baltimore Oriole that his mother made into a tile plaque. It now hangs on a wall in their home among other bird art and photos.



It was not unexpected that they got involved in "listing" birds seen, since they have been listers for life, with an eclectic selection of subject matter. Once residing near a railroad track, Pam listed the names of rail cars that rolled past and later branched out into Iowa seed corn companies (did you there is one called Mallard?) and the Iowa towns through which she had passed. Reid started his listing with radio stations. He explains that the radio-station-listing counterpart of a warbler fallout was when a powerful AM station went off the air on a summer night, allowing the weaker signals of weaker stations to be heard. Reid went on to keep track of Iowa county license plates and, of course, birds, checked off in a Peterson's field guide. Reid observes that while most people keep a state list, he and Pam initially kept only a life list. When the Magnificent Frigatebirds appeared in Iowa following Hurricane Gilbert in 1988, they declined to go look for them. After all, they had already seen the species in Florida. He credits Eugene and Eloise Armstrong for pointing out that a lot of people also kept a state list.

Once they caught the listing bug, Reid and Pam found that they weren't content with just one or two lists. They now maintain a year list, a world list, an England

list, Iowa year and life lists, a Lower 48 list, a Polk County list, a yard list, and a February 29 list compiled from their traditional big day on that date. Unlike the experience with the frigatebird, the Allens can now frequently be found among other "twitchers" searching impatiently for a newly discovered rarity. Reid explains: "Keeping a list may not be more productive than watching Murphy Brown, but it's a helluva lot more fun."

Motivated by the desire to learn about birding areas other than their own backyard, the Allen's first serious foray into birding began in 1987 when they attended a Des Moines Audubon Society picnic in Greenwood Park. Pam had known Ruth Buckles of Des Moines and began to ask her about the birds she and Reid had seen. Attending later field trips, they figured out that if they wanted to know what was going on, they should hang around with Eugene and Eloise. They have found that trips with both the Des Moines Audubon Society and the I.O.U. have led them to Iowa's most beautiful areas, from Shimek State Forest ("South Vietnam" quips Reid), Effigy Mounds (Iowa's own "death march"), and their favorite spot, Myre Slough in southwestern Winnebago County. Reid finds that birding appeals to his competitive nature, but also enjoys the challenge of finding birds, and the sport's unpredictability. Pam enjoys the quietness and peace of looking for birds and the fact that it can be done anywhere. She also enjoys seeing old friends and making new acquaintances. They now plan their vacations around birding and have traveled to many of the country's most well-known birding locations, including their favorite, South Padre Island in Texas. They note that while birding tours can be both instructive and productive, birders can go into an area and find birds on their own.

While birding leaves little time for other pursuits, Reid finds time for employment at Drake University where he is Athletic Business Manager. Some of his other interests invariably intermingle with birding. His interest in photography has resulted in some 1,400 photos of more than 300 bird species, and have appeared on the cover of *Iowa Bird Life*. He is also an active traveler of the Internet and has found such resources as the National Birding Hotline to be important birding tools. Pam does not currently work outside the home but keeps busy with the service organization PEO, serving as Chair of the Drake Relays High School Jury, gourmet cooking, and, of course, the hours of work required of her as I.O.U. Treasurer. An ongoing project they share is the landscaping of their yard. The time and effort they have spent there is reflected in thoughtfully designed islands of flowers and shrubs and a newly created pond. While certainly appealing to humans, the suburban yard, with its cover and feeders, is also appealing to birds and has produced 138 species including Black-throated Blue Warbler and a wayward Northern Bobwhite.

Birding with Reid and Pam gives the sense that, in addition to their enjoyment of birds and birders, they also have a deep appreciation of the environment and its denizens. A recent program they gave at the Des Moines Audubon Society on "Birding the Heartland's Prairie Potholes" illustrated not only their teamwork, but their concern about our Earth. Pam provided information and descriptions of the birds and Reid offered background information about the area's geology and geography. Then, Reid concluded the program with a quote from one of Iowa's most visionary naturalists, Aldo Leopold:

Like winds and sunsets, wild things were taken for granted until progress began to do away with them. Now we face the question whether a still higher standard of living is worth its cost in things natural, wild and free.

*1315 41st Street, Des Moines, IA 50311*

# FIELD REPORTS--SUMMER 1995

JAMES J. DINSMORE

## WEATHER

June was generally fairly cool. There was one stretch of warm weather in the middle of the month and then a spell of fairly heavy rain later in the month. Overall, rainfall was below average in much of the state although southern Iowa remained very wet with many flooded fields.

July started out fairly cool but a blast of hot air settled in on 10 July and gave Iowa its first 100 degree days since 1991. The worst days were 12 July when Council Bluffs reached 109 degrees and 13 July when all except three reporting stations reached 100 degrees or more with a high of 106 in Council Bluffs. Overall, it was a fairly typical July with daytime highs averaging in the mid 80s. Fortunately, that warm weather came after much of the nesting activity was over so it probably had less effect on birds than it would have earlier in the summer. Most of the state ended the period with average or above average precipitation for the year. There still was a fair amount of sheetwater habitat available for shorebirds, and several observers thought we had a reasonable shorebird migration.



## UNUSUAL SIGHTINGS

This summer was relatively unexciting for birders. The only accidental species reported was a MacGillivray's Warbler that, if accepted, would be the first state record. Casual species reported included the Mississippi Kites that returned to Des Moines and Red Knot. Other unusual birds reported included Common Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Dunlin, Bonaparte's Gull, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Bewick's Wren, Winter Wren, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Prairie Warbler, and Clay-colored Sparrow.

Among reports of nesting, the highlight was the first state nesting record for Prairie Warbler while the first successful nesting by Ring-billed Gulls was a close second. Other unusual nesting reports were the first Short-eared Owl and Bewick's Wren nests in several years and a White-eyed Vireo nest. Four state endangered species seemed to have good years. Both the Piping Plover and Least Tern had very successful years, both from the number of young produced and from the fact that they both nested at Sioux City for the first time in several years. Barn Owls also appeared to have a banner year although some of the reports need to be confirmed. Although nests were not reported, the population of Henslow's Sparrows in southeastern Iowa also seemed to be doing well. Based on the number of reports, the same may have been true of Northern Harrier but no nests were reported. Reports of both Black-and-white Warbler and Canada Warbler in the nesting season were highly suggestive of nesting but not confirmed.

SPECIES DATA (\* = documented, [ ] = record dates)

**Common Loon:** 1 on Pool 13 near Sabula on 13 Jun (CK) and another at Trumbull L. in Clay Co. on 29 Jul (LAS) were the only reports.

- Pied-billed Grebe:** Broods were reported at Jemmerson Sl. in Dickinson Co. (PJW), Grovers L. in Dickinson Co. (NBe), near Nebraska City in Fremont Co. (THK), and Errington M. in Polk Co. (BE).
- Eared Grebe:** 3 at Grovers L. on 13 Jun (NBe) and 1 there on 1 Jul (LAS) and 23 Jul (NBe) were the only reports.
- Western Grebe:** 1 on Fisher L. in Des Moines on 4 Jul (PJW) and 1 on 9 Jul at Harrier M. near Ogden in Boone Co. (PHA, RIA) were the only reports, fewer than most summers.
- American White Pelican:** I received fewer reports than in most recent years. The only sizeable summer groups were 50 at Grovers L. on 13 Jun (NBe) and 20 at Coralville Res. on 2 Jul (THK) while 320 at Trumbull L./Barringer Sl. on 29 Jul (LAS) was the first big group of post-breeders.
- Double-crested Cormorant:** On Pool 13 near Sabula, 689 nests were found on four islands (CK), an indication of how this species' populations have mushroomed in recent years. The usual non-breeding birds were found scattered across the state.
- American Bittern:** Singles heard at Spring Run W.A. and McBreen M., both in Dickinson Co., in June (Jeannette Schafer fide JJD) were the only reports.
- Least Bittern:** 1 or 2 were found in Cerro Gordo, Clay, Dickinson, Fremont, and Kossuth counties. The only nest was at Deweys Pasture in Clay Co. in June (Jeannette Schafer fide JJD).
- Great Blue Heron:** The colony at Rice L. in Winnebago Co. was active (CJF) as was a new one with 10-12 nests nw. of Green Island in Jackson Co. (PCP). The colony below Saylorville Dam appeared abandoned in early June, perhaps because of human disturbance (BE). The first sign of post-breeding birds was 50 counted at Riverton W.A. on 29 Jul (THK).
- Great Egret:** The only report of nesting was on Pool 13 where 180 nests were found on two islands (CK). The 50 at Heron Bend in Lee Co. on 28 Jul (THK) and 15 at Waubonsie W.A. in Fremont Co. on 29 Jul (THK) were the only other large groups reported.
- Snowy Egret:** An immature at Waubonsie W.A. on 29 Jul (THK) was the only report.
- Little Blue Heron:** 4 adults in SW Fremont Co. on 3 Jun (CE) and an immature at Waubonsie W.A. on 29 Jul (THK) were the only reports.
- Cattle Egret:** Other than 6 s. of Midwest Power ponds in Mills Co. on 1 Jun (BKP, LJP) and 1 below Saylorville Dam on 10 Jun (BE), all the reports were from the Nebraska City area in Fremont Co. On 3 Jun, 140 were seen there (CE) and 300 were seen entering a roost on 29 Jul (THK).
- Black-crowned Night-Heron:** The only reported nesting colony was at Grovers L. where at least 5 nests were present 13 Jun (NBe, LAS).
- Yellow-crowned Night-Heron:** An adult s. of Burlington in Des Moines Co. on 21 Jun (JLF, THK) was the only report.
- Trumpeter Swan:** An unmarked bird seen several times in July near Cosgrove in Johnson Co. (JLF, THK) was the only potentially "wild" swan reported.
- Snow Goose:** From 1 to 5 were found in Dickinson, Fremont, Kossuth, Polk, and Pottawattamie counties, about typical for summer.
- Green-winged Teal:** 1 or 2 were reported in Boone, Dickinson, Fremont, Kossuth, and Polk counties.
- Northern Pintail:** A male at Pool 13 near Green Island W.A. on 3 Jun (CK) and a female there on 6 Jun (CK) were the only reports.
- Northern Shoveler:** Dugout Creek W.A. in Dickinson Co. was the hotspot with 2 pairs and 2 more males on 18 Jun (JJD), and a brood of 4 on 1 Jul (LAS). Others were reported in Kossuth, Pocahontas, and Polk counties.
- Gadwall:** High counts were 24 at Myre Slough in Winnebago Co. and 10 at Meredith M. in Winnebago Co., both on 15 Jul (RGo). Others were seen in Dickinson, Kossuth, and Polk counties.
- Canvasback:** 1 at Kettleson Hogsback W.A. in Dickinson Co. on 1 Jul (LAS) and another at Union Slough N.W.R. on 5, 16 Jul (MCK) were the only reports.
- Redhead:** An amazing 26 pairs were on a small pond at Spring Run W.A. on 19 Jun (JJD); the only other reports were 5 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 11 Jun (MCK) and 15 at Kettleson Hogsback W.A. on 1 Jul (LAS).
- Ring-necked Duck:** A male at Big Sand Mound Preserve in Louisa Co. on 17 Jun (PCP) was the only report.
- Lesser Scaup:** The usual reports of late migrants and summering birds came from Dickinson, Kossuth, Linn, Polk, and Pottawattamie counties. The most was 14 (12 males, 2 females) at Union Slough N.W.R. on 11 Jun (MCK).
- Common Goldeneye:** A male on Pool 13 near Sabula on 6 Jun (CK) was the first summer report since 1991.
- Hooded Merganser:** Other than 2 at Jemmerson Sl. in Dickinson Co. on 8 Jun (M. Lannoo fide NBe), all reports were from near the Mississippi R.; Goose L. in Clinton Co., Green Island W.A., Big Sand Mound Preserve, and Mark Twain N.W.R. in Louisa Co.



**Red-breasted Merganser:** 2 females at the Midwest Power ponds in Pottawattamie Co. on 1 Jun (BKP, LJP), a female near Percival in Fremont Co. on 3 Jun (MPR), and 2 females near Hubbard in Hardin Co. on 13 Jun (MPR) were the first summer reports in 10 years.

**Ruddy Duck:** From 1 to 3 were reported in Dickinson, Kossuth, Polk, and Pottawattamie counties.

**Turkey Vulture:** 25 at Rathbun Res. on 15 Jul (RLC) and 30 on the Upper Iowa R. on 22 Jul (DeC) were the only large groups reported.

**Osprey:** 1 at Saylorville Res. on 22 Jul (Scott Rolles fide SJD) was the only report.

**Mississippi Kite:** 1 was seen repeatedly in June and July in the Windsor Heights area of Des Moines, and 2 were reported there on 26 Jul (PHA, RIA).

**Bald Eagle:** An adult in W Lyon Co. on 2 Jul (Marty Eby fide SJD) was far from any known nest sites while a successful nest in Appanoose Co. was a first record for the county in recent history. At least 38 nests were active this year (BEh). A number of these were away from their traditional Mississippi R. stronghold as this species continues to expand its range in Iowa.

**Northern Harrier:** An adult and immature at Hayden Prairie in Howard Co. on 19 Jul (DeC) and 4 birds at a pasture in Lyon Co. on 15 Jul (LAS) were both suggestive of nesting. In addition, singles were seen in June at Jemmerston Sl. (M. Lannoo fide NBe), Snake Creek M. in Greene Co. (JJD), near Castalia in Winneshiek Co. (DeC), near Union Slough N.W.R. (MCK), at two sites near Coralville Res. (THK, NBe), and in NE Des Moines Co. (PCP). This is more sightings than are normally reported in summer.

**Cooper's Hawk:** Singles at Saylorville Res. on 10 Jun (BE), L. Macbride on 21 Jul (JLF), Rathbun Res. on 1 Jul (RLC), and in Des Moines on 10 Jul (BE); and 2 immatures at L. Macbride on 28 Jul (CE) are all the reports. A nest was active in Cedar Rapids in late May (NBe).

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** 1 at Backbone S.P. in Delaware Co. on 6 Jun (WRN) was the only report.

**Broad-winged Hawk:** 1 or 2 were reported in Des Moines (PJW, BE), Iowa City (THK), Elfigy Mounds N.M. (DeC), Shimek F. in Lee Co. (RIC), and Waubonsie S.P. in Fremont Co. (BKP, LJP); most probably represent nesting pairs. I received a late report of a pair building a nest in Munn Woods in Ames in May (C. Paisley fide SJD).

**Swainson's Hawk:** 1 s. of Algona on 6 Jun, 16 Jul (MCK) and another e. of Sibley in Osceola Co. on 20 Jul (BKP, LJP) were the only reports.

**Peregrine Falcon:** Nests in Des Moines (3 young) and Cedar Rapids (2 young) were both successful (Iowa DNR).

**Gray Partridge:** 1 near Whitten in Hardin Co. (BPr, MPR), 1 near Errington M. (BE), and a brood in Johnson Co. (JLF) were the only reports.

**Greater Prairie-Chicken:** I received a late report of a male displaying in the middle of the highway 44 and 169 intersection (!) in Dallas Co. on 1 May (RKM). The closest release site for recent stockings is in Adair Co. some 30-40 miles away.

**Northern Bobwhite:** 2 at Cedar Hills Sand Prairie in Black Hawk Co. on 7 Jul (JLF) were somewhat north of this species usual range in eastern Iowa.

**Virginia Rail:** Broods were found near Grovers L. (Jeannette Schafer fide JJD), at Silver L. in Worth Co. (RGo), and at Myre Sl. in Winnebago Co. (RGo).

**Sora:** Called common in the Great Lakes region where a nest was found on Deweys Pasture (Jeannette Schafer fide JJD), the only other report was 1 near L. Manawa on 1 Jun (BKP, LJP).

**Common Moorhen:** Broods were found at Green Island W.A. in Jackson Co. (JLF, THK) and Jemmerston Sl. in Dickinson Co. (PJW). The only other reports were singles at Cardinal M. in Winneshiek Co. in early June (DeC), near Lewis and Clark L. in Monona Co. on 21 Jul (BKP, LJP), and at Goose L. in Clinton Co. in late June and July (THK, JLF).

**American Coot:** After the strong spring migration, few remained to nest in central and NW Iowa (JJD). An immature at Rathbun Res. on 23 Jul (RLC) suggested nesting in southern Iowa.

**Sandhill Crane:** 1 young was seen at Otter Creek W.A. in Tama Co. in June (Mike Stegman fide JJD) and up to 4 adults were seen at Goose L. in Clinton Co. on 8 Jul (DCD, JLF). Two young were seen near Sweet's M. in Bremer Co. (Iowa DNR), the first report of nesting from that area.

**Semipalmated Plover:** The first were 2 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 16 Jul (MCK). Several others were found in late July.

**Piping Plover:** Other than 1 at Rathbun Res. on 30 Jul (RLC), all reports were from the two nesting sites in western Iowa. At Midwest Power ponds in Pottawattamie Co., 2 pairs hatched at least 7 young (BKP, LJP), while at Port Neal s. of Sioux City, 4 pairs hatched at least 9 young (BFH). This is the highest productivity in Iowa in several years.

**Killdeer:** 50 counted at Coralville Res. on 9 Jul (THK) was the most reported.

**American Avocet:** 5 at Rathbun Res. on 23 Jul (RLC, TNJ) was the only report.

**Greater Yellowlegs:** Other than 2 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 16 Jul (MCK), all others were in late July.

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** 5 at Dugout Creek W.A. on 1 Jul (LAS) and 150 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 16 Jul (MCK) were the first and most reports.

**Solitary Sandpiper:** 1 at Green Island W.A. on 29 Jun (THK) was the first and 6 on the Little Sioux R. in Clay Co. on 8 Jul (LAS) was the next earliest and the most.

**Willet:** 2 at Port Neal on 23 Jun (BFH) [ties 2nd earliest] were unexpected and the first midsummer report in decades. 7 at Rathbun Res. on 23 Jul (TNJ) was the only other report.

**Spotted Sandpiper:** From 1 to 3 were reported in Allamakee, Jefferson, Linn, Mills, Pottawattamie, and Woodbury counties.

**Upland Sandpiper:** From 1 to 6 were reported in Carroll, Clinton, Dallas, Hancock, Iowa, Polk, and Wayne counties.

**Ruddy Turnstone:** 1 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 23 Jul (MCK, details, record earliest) and 1 at the Midwest Power ponds on 31 Jul (BKP, LJP) were the only reports.

**Red Knot:** 1 at Rathbun Res. on 23 Jul (TNJ, details) was the only report.

**Sanderling:** 2 at the Casey Borrow Access in Des Moines Co. on 28 Jul (THK) was the only report.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper:** Spring migrants lingered late this year with 1 near Anderson L. in Hamilton Co. on 13 Jun (MPR), 4 near Pleasant Creek L. in Linn Co. on 12 Jun (DLD), and 15 at Harrier M. on 12 Jun (JJD). The first southbound bird apparently was 1 near Pleasant Creek S.P. on 3 Jul (DLD), and the most was 30 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 23 Jul (MCK).

**Western Sandpiper:** 1 at Rathbun Res. on 23 Jul (RLC, details) was the only report.

**Least Sandpiper:** 1 at Port Neal on 30 Jun (BFH, details) was the first, and 100 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 16 Jul (MCK) was the most.

**Baird's Sandpiper:** 1 at Credit Is. in Scott Co. on 8 Jul (PCP) ties the 3rd earliest date. All others were from 23 July on with 3 at Errington M. (BE) and 3 along the Little Sioux R. in Clay Co. (LAS), both on 29 Jul, the most.

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** 1 at Harrier M. on 9 Jul (PHA, RIA) was the first, and 100 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 16 Jul (MCK) was the most reported.

**Dunlin:** 1 at Coralville Res. on 30 Jul (\*THK) was molting into basic plumage.

**Stilt Sandpiper:** 15 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 16 Jul (MCK) was the first report and 30 there on 23 Jul (MCK) the most.

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** 1 on 31 Jul at Coralville Res. (JLF, THK) was the only report.

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** 2 at Harrier M. on 9 Jul (PHA, RIA), 4 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 16 Jul (MCK), and 1 at Rathbun Res. on 23 Jul (RLC, TNJ, details) were all the reports.

**American Woodcock:** 1 on Huron Is. in Des Moines Co. on 15 Jun was the only report but because of high water, the bird almost certainly didn't nest there (PCP).

**Wilson's Phalarope:** 1 at Errington M. on 16 Jul (BE) was the only report.

**Franklin's Gull:** Most of the reports were from along the Missouri R.; 50 s. of Midwest Power ponds on 1 Jun (BKP, LJP) and 27 at the ponds on 3 Jun (CE) were probably late migrants. 2 at Rathbun Res. on 17 Jun (TNJ), 3 near Nebraska City on 23 Jun (JLF), and 3 at Port Neal on 30 Jun (BFH) may have have summered while 400+ at Meinking M. in Dickinson Co. on 30 Jul (LAS) probably were post-breeding birds.

**Bonaparte's Gull:** 2 in immature plumage at Meinking M. on 19 Jun (JJD, details) were the first summer report in several years.

**Ring-billed Gull:** About 75-100 were at Meinking M. on 19 Jun where they nested on an island (JJD). A few young were seen there in late June (T. Waltz fide JJD). A few probably summered at Midwest Power ponds (BKP, LJP) and Saylorville Res. (BE) while 200 along the Mississippi R. in Des Moines and Lee counties on 28 Jul (THK) and 170 at Trumbull L. on 29 Jul (LAS) were probably post-breeding birds.

**Caspian Tern:** 3 at Union Slough N.W.R. on 11 Jun (MCK), 2 at Port Neal on 14 Jul (BFH), 3 at Pleasant Creek S.P. on 24 Jul (DLD), and 1 at Casey Borrow Access in Des Moines Co. on 28 Jul (THK) were all the reports.

**Common Tern:** 1 at the Midwest Power ponds on 3 Jun (MPR, details) and 1 at Kettleston W.P.A. in Dickinson Co. on 21 Jun (LAS, details) were all the reports.

**Forster's Tern:** The only report of nesting was at Grovers L. where more than 100 adults were seen on 13 Jun (NBe); 39 were there on 1 Jul (LAS). Small groups reported from much of the state in July probably were post-breeding birds.

**Least Tern:** This was the best year for this species in several years. At the Midwest Power ponds, at least 4 adults were present and produced at least 5 young (BKP, LJP). At Port Neal, 12 adults were present with 6 nests that produced at least 6 young (BFH).

**Black Tern:** They were common in the Great Lakes region this summer (LAS) but the only report of nesting was at Grovers L. (NBe). The numerous reports after mid-July were post-breeding birds; 117 at the Midwest Power ponds on 29 Jul (BKP, LJP) was the most.

- Black-billed Cuckoo:** Several observers commented on the apparent scarcity of this species. Reports of singles came from Dallas, Hancock, Johnson, Story, Wayne, and Woodbury counties.
- Yellow-billed Cuckoo:** From 1 to 9 were reported from Appanoose, Buchanan, Cerro Gordo, Clayton, Dallas, Delaware, Fremont, Grundy, Hamilton, Hardin, Johnson, Linn, Marshall, Plymouth, Polk, Poweshiek, Story, Tama, and Taylor counties. This species seems to be uncommon but still regular throughout Iowa.
- Barn Owl:** An amazing 4 nests were found at the Zelbert Freemyer farm in Taylor County (BEh). Other nests were found in Guthrie, Mills, and Taylor counties (BEh), making this one of the most productive years on record.
- Short-eared Owl:** 3 including 1 young bird seen near Union Slough N.W.R. on 23 Jun (MCK) represents the first Iowa nesting record in several years.
- Chuck-will's-widow:** Besides the usual 1-3 n. of Waubesa S.P. in Fremont Co., 1 was calling at Stephens S.F. in Lucas Co. on 17 Jun (AMJ), and 1 or 2 were at Big Sand Mound Preserve (DCD, PCP) where one was actually seen!
- Ruby-throated Hummingbird:** Active nests were found at Leverton Timber in Hardin Co. on 6 Jun (BPr, MPr) and at Yellow River F. in June and July (WRN).
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Broods or active nests were noted at Yellow River F. (WRN), Green Island W.A. (DCD, JLF), and Effigy Mounds N.M. (DCe), all near the Mississippi R. floodplain. Other reports were a female in Cerro Gordo Co. (RGo), 1 at Oak Grove P. in Sioux Co. on 22 Jun (JV), and several n. of Algona (Rod Schmidt fide MCK).
- Pileated Woodpecker:** Away from its usual E Iowa stronghold, the only mention of this species was its absence from below the Saylorville Dam since 1 Jan 1993 (BE).
- Acadian Flycatcher:** From 1 to 5 were reported in Allamakee, Appanoose, Boone, Hardin, Iowa, Lee, and Van Buren counties.
- Alder Flycatcher:** 1 at Union Grove S.P. in Tama Co. on 10 Jun (MPr, details) was the only report and somewhat late.
- Willow Flycatcher:** From 1 to 6 were heard in Appanoose, Cerro Gordo, Dickinson, Johnson, Kossuth, Linn, Mahaska, Polk, Winnebago, and Winneshiek counties.
- Least Flycatcher:** Singles at Otter Creek M. on 1 Jun (MPr) and Algona on 3 Jun (MCK) were probably late migrants while 1 vocalizing near Highlandville in Winneshiek Co. on 6 Jul (DeC) may have been breeding nearby.
- Western Kingbird:** Other than singles in SW Iowa, 1 at the State Capitol grounds in Des Moines on 9 Jul (BE) was the only report.
- Scissor-tailed Flycatcher:** An immature near Pleasant Creek S.P. in Linn Co. on 31 Jul (\*DLD) was the only report.
- Cliff Swallow:** The colony on the highway 17 bridge on the north end of Saylorville Res. had an estimated 2,500 birds on 19 Jun (BE).
- Brown Creeper:** 3 at Huron Is. on 15 Jun (PCP) and 1 in Jackson Co. on 20 Jun (PCP) were the only reports.
- Carolina Wren:** 1 or 2 reported in Johnson, Lee, Mills, and Van Buren counties where this species is expected. One calling at West Lake Okoboji in Dickinson Co. in June and July (NBe) was far out of its usual range.
- Bewick's Wren:** A nest in E Iowa Co. that fledged 7 young (Bruce Hochstetler fide JLF) seems to be the first confirmed nest in Iowa since 1981.
- Winter Wren:** 1 near Giard in Allamakee Co. in mid June (Lisa Hemesath fide WRN) and another at Pikes Peak S.P. in Clayton Co. in late June (Bruce Ehresman fide WRN) were the first summer reports in 6 years and support the view that a few Winter Wrens may nest in NE Iowa most years.
- Sedge Wren:** Although few observers mentioned this species, several noted that it was fairly common. The Conservation Reserve Program seems to have provided it with much habitat.
- Mountain Bluebird:** I received a report of 1 near Sutherland in O'Brien Co. on 12 Apr (DK, details).
- Veery:** Only four observers mentioned this species; from 1 to 6 were found in Boone, Delaware, and Hardin counties (JDa, BPr, MPr) while 9 were heard in Stephens S.F. in Lucas Co. on 17 Jun (AMJ). Is this species becoming harder to find in Iowa?
- Wood Thrush:** From 1 to 14 were reported in Allamakee, Appanoose, Boone, Buchanan, Cerro Gordo, Clayton, Floyd, Fremont, Hancock, Hardin, Johnson, Lee, Linn, Mills, Polk, Poweshiek, and Tama counties. One singing along the Big Sioux R. in Lyon Co. on 15 Jul (LAS) was somewhat outside its usual range.
- Northern Mockingbird:** 1 at Big Sand Mound Preserve on 17 Jun (PCP), 2 near Goose L. in Clinton Co. on 8 Jul (JLF), and 2 ne. of Lone Tree in Johnson Co. on 28 Jul (THK) were all the reports.
- Bohemian Waxwing:** 1 near Sutherland in O'Brien Co. lingered until 29 Mar (2nd latest, DK).

- Loggerhead Shrike:** From 1 to 3 were found in Benton, Cerro Gordo, Fremont, Jasper, Jefferson, Linn (brood), Madison, Mahaska, Polk, Plymouth, and Union counties, fewer than are reported most summers.
- White-eyed Vireo:** The only reports were from Huron Island on 15 Jun (PCP) and the Croton Unit of Shimek S.F. where 3 young were found on 2 Jul (CE).
- Bell's Vireo:** From 1 to 4 were reported from Appanoose, Fremont, Linn, Mahaska, Mills, Polk, Story, Winneshiek, and Woodbury counties. A nest in NW Linn Co. was parasitized by cowbirds (DLD).
- Yellow-throated Vireo:** From 1 to 4 were reported from Allamakee, Appanoose, Boone, Clayton, Delaware, Fayette, Fremont, Hamilton, Hardin, Johnson, Marshall, Polk, Poweshiek, Tama, and Winneshiek counties.
- Blue-winged Warbler:** From 1 to 9 were reported in Allamakee, Cerro Gordo, Fayette, Johnson, Lee, Linn, and Winneshiek counties. These included broods at Coon Creek A. in Winneshiek Co. (DeC) and L. Macbride in Johnson Co. (CE).
- Northern Parula:** From 1 to 3 were found in Appanoose, Boone, Delaware, Jefferson, Johnson, Lee, Madison, Polk, and Van Buren counties, about typical of most summers.
- Yellow Warbler:** A nest at Pleasant Creek S.P. was parasitized by cowbirds (DLD).
- Chestnut-sided Warbler:** 1 in NE Delaware Co. on 1 Jun (WRN, details) and another in NE Allamakee Co. on 5, 17, 23 Jun (WRN, details) were the only reports.
- Magnolia Warbler:** A male in Sioux City on 4 Jul (\*WL) was only the second summer report in a decade.
- Black-throated Green Warbler:** 1 singing at White Pine Hollow in Dubuque Co. on 12, 14 Jun (WRN, details) was the third midsummer report in the last 4 years.
- Yellow-throated Warbler:** From 1 to 3 were found at Lacey Keosauqua S.P. in Van Buren County (CE), L. Macbride (CE), Saylorville Res. (BE), and Pine L. S.P. in Hardin Co. (MPR, details). Only the latter was out of its usual haunts.
- Prairie Warbler:** All of the reports were from L. Macbride S.P. where a male was seen from 7 Jun on (CE\*, JLF, THK). On 8 Jul, a pair with 4 young were found (CE), the first verified nesting record of this species in Iowa. (see note in this issue)
- Cerulean Warbler:** From 1-10 were reported from Allamakee, Appanoose, Boone, Clayton, Delaware, Dubuque, Hardin, Lee, Polk, Tama, and Van Buren counties, somewhat more than most years. One on 14 Jun at West Lake Okoboji. (NBe) was out of its usual range.
- Black-and-white Warbler:** 1 singing in West Oak Forest in Mills Co. on 3 Jun and accompanied by a second bird on 11 Jun (BKP, LJP) was suggestive of a nesting pair. One on 18 Jun in Stephens S.F. in Lucas Co. (AMJ) may have been nesting, while 1 in Ames on 19 July (DEd) was probably an early migrant.
- Prothonotary Warbler:** Other than 3 below Saylorville Dam on 10 Jun (BE), all the reports were in Allamakee and Des Moines counties along the Mississippi R.
- Worm-eating Warbler:** 1 in Shimek S.F. on 11 Jun and 2 Jul (CE) was the only report.
- Ovenbird:** From 1 to 12 were reported in Allamakee, Boone, Clayton, Delaware, Hardin, Madison, Mills, Polk, and Winneshiek counties. Among the warblers, this species seems to be doing well.
- Louisiana Waterthrush:** Singles were reported in Allamakee, Boone, Clayton, Delaware, Dubuque, Fremont, Lee, and Van Buren counties, about typical of most summers.
- Kentucky Warbler:** From 1 to 4 were reported in Allamakee, Appanoose, Clayton, Delaware, Lee, Mills, and Van Buren counties, all in sites where this species is expected.
- MacGillivray's Warbler:** A June report will be referred to the Records Committee.
- Hooded Warbler:** Singles were reported in Yellow River F. (JLF, WRN), Stephens S.F. (AMJ), and at three sites in Lee Co. (RIC, CE, JLF).
- Canada Warbler:** 2 or perhaps 3 individuals were seen in White Pine Hollow in Dubuque Co. on 1, 13, 29 Jun and 20 Jul (WRN, details), again raising the possibility that this species nests in NE Iowa.
- Yellow-breasted Chat:** Singles were found in Lee Co. (2 sites, CE, JLF), Walnut Creek N.W.R. in Jasper Co. (Shawn Morrissey fide JJD), and Sioux City (BFH).
- Summer Tanager:** 1 or 2 were found in Appanoose, Fremont, Mills, and Polk counties; 1 at Brown's Woods in Des Moines on 4 Jun (BE) was the furthest north reported.
- Scarlet Tanager:** From 1 to 6 were found in Allamakee, Benton, Boone, Buchanan, Cerro Gordo, Clayton, Delaware, Floyd, Fremont, Hardin, Johnson, Linn, Marshall, Mills, Polk, Poweshiek, Tama, and Winneshiek counties. This species seems to be holding its own in E and SW Iowa.
- Blue Grosbeak:** 1 or 2 were found in Fremont, Lyon, Mills, and Pottawattamie counties, while it was considered very common in Sioux Co. (JV). No one reported any from its usual SE Iowa haunts.
- Dickcissel:** There were mixed opinions ranging from very common in Polk and Fremont counties (BE, MPR) and Sioux Co. (JV) to scarce and reduced numbers in NW Iowa (NBe), NE Iowa (DeC), and Clinton Co. (PCP).

**Clay-colored Sparrow:** A male singing near New Albin in Allamakee Co. on 6, 7 Jun, 4 Jul (WRN, details), was far east of where this species is expected.

**Vesper Sparrow:** Petersen noted that the number found on a Breeding Bird Survey route in Clinton Co. had dropped steadily over the past 3 years.

**Lark Sparrow:** From 1 to 3 were found in Appanoose, Boone, Fayette, Fremont, Linn, and Lyon counties including a brood on 25 Jun at the Matsell Bridge A. in Linn Co. (DLD).

**Savannah Sparrow:** 1 on 1 Jul in NC Appanoose Co. (RLC) was a long-time observers first summer record for that county.

**Henslow's Sparrow:** The site near Lacey-Keosauqua S.P. had as many as 12 birds on 14 Jun (JLF) indicating that this isolated population was still doing well.

**Eastern Meadowlark:** Several singing w. of Estherville on 19 Jun (JJD) were out of this species' usual range.

**Yellow-headed Blackbird:** 14 males e. of Colo in Story Co. (HZ) and several at Errington M. (BE) were close to the periphery of this species' range.

**Great-tailed Grackle:** Except for 2 at Otter Creek M. in June (Mike Stegman fide JJD), all other reports were from Fremont Co.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** See Bell's Vireo and Yellow Warbler.

**Orchard Oriole:** 1 or 2 were reported in Allamakee (brood), Appanoose, Dickinson, Fremont, Johnson, Linn, Pocahontas, Poweshiek, and Winneshiek counties.

**House Finch:** No one mentioned this species, an indication of how rapidly and thoroughly it has colonized Iowa.

**Eurasian Tree Sparrow:** 1 at Hawkeye Dolby landing in Des Moines Co. on 15 Jun (PCP) was at a new site while 3 were at the usual site n. of Burlington on 28 Jul (THK).

## COMMENT

As usual, this report depends on the information sent to me plus other material I can glean from around the state. I am especially grateful to a core of individuals who have faithfully sent in reports over the years. Whether these contain just a few sightings or dozens, they are useful in trying to put together a composite picture of the summer season. With the breeding bird atlas project well behind us, it is apparent that there is less birding activity in summer now than there was a few years ago and thus each report is even more valuable now. I thank those who do take the time to send in their reports and encourage others to do the same.

## REPORTS RECEIVED (\* = documentation only)

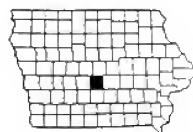
Pam H. Allen (PHA), West Des Moines; Reid I. Allen (RIA), West Des Moines; Neil Bernstein (NBe), Cedar Rapids; Dennis Carter (DeC), Decorah; Robert I. Cecil (RIC), Des Moines; Raymond L. Cummins (RLC), Centerville; David L. Dankert (DLD), Cedar Rapids; Jeff Dankert (JDa), La Crosse, WI; James J. Dinsmore (JJD), Ames; Stephen J. Dinsmore (SJD), Ames; Dan C. Dorrance (DCD), Davenport; Chris Edwards (CE), North Liberty; David Edwards (DEd), Ames; Bruce Ehresman (BEh), Ames; Bery Engebretsen (BE), Des Moines; Carolyn J. Fischer (CJF), Mason City; James L. Fuller (JLF), Iowa City; Rita A. Goranson (RGo), Mason City; Bill F. Huser (BFH), South Sioux City, NE; Thomas N. Johnson (TNJ), Mystic; Matthew C. Kenne (MCK), Algona; Thomas H. Kent (THK), Iowa City; Chris Kochanny (CK), Lansing; Darwin Koenig (DK), Ankeny; Fred Leshner (FL), La Crosse, WI; \*Wayne Livermore (WL), Sioux City; Robert K. Myers (RKM), Perry; Babs K. Padelford (BKP), Bellevue, NE; Loren J. Padelford (LJP), Bellevue, NE; Peter C. Petersen (PCP), Davenport; Diane C. Porter (DCP), Fairfield; Beth Proescholdt (BPr), Liscomb; Mark Proescholdt (MPr), Liscomb; Lee A. Schoenewe (LAS), Spencer; Philip J. Walsh (PJW), Des Moines; Eva Wiedemeyer, Carroll (EW); and Hank Zaletel, (HZ), Colo.

4024 Arkansas Drive, Ames, IA 50014

# LAUGHING GULL AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

THOMAS H. KENT

Gordon Brown reported to the Birdline an adult Laughing Gull that he saw below the Saylorville Reservoir dam on 10 May 1995. I arrived there the next morning at 8:10 a.m. The black-hooded gull was easily picked out from the first-summer Ring-billed and Herring gulls and alternate-plumaged Caspian Terns present. It was 10 to 15 percent smaller than the Ring-billed Gulls, but its legs were nearly as long. The all-black hood extended to the back of the nape. There were white crescents above and below the eyes. The lower one was just a thin white line. The upper one was slightly wider and more on the posterior side than the anterior side of the dark eye. The bill was about two-thirds as long as that of the average Ring-billed Gull. It was dark gray-maroon and drooped smoothly at the upper tip. The legs were dark dusky-pink. The mantle was dark gray. I flushed the bird twice to see it in flight and to take photographs. The wing tips from the bend of the wing to the tip were black from above and below. On the upper surface, there was a thin white trailing edge on the secondaries and inner primaries. The proximal wing was dark gray above and nearly white below. There was no white between the distal black and proximal gray. The tail was all white -- no gray in the center. While on the bar, the bird was preening and standing. I was surprised when the bird let out a typical Laughing Gull laugh. Pam Allen also documented similar field marks and heard the bird call.



Laughing Gull has been found in Iowa each year since the first accepted record in 1989. Most have been juvenile or first-summer/second-winter birds found in summer or fall, although one adult was at Saylorville Reservoir on 13 Apr 1990 (*IBL* 61:20, 62:21). First- and even second-summer Franklin's Gulls may lack the white bar separating the outer black wing tip from the inner gray upper wing. Perhaps a better mark for separating these two species is the amount of black on the wing tip on the underside of the wing. Franklin's has a small amount giving a "dipped in ink" look, while Laughing has most of the outer part of the underwing black (Fig. 1).

211 Richards St., Iowa City, IA 52246



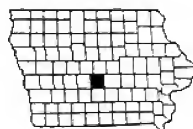
Figure 1. Adult Laughing Gull at Saylorville Reservoir. Note amount of dark on under part of outer wing.



## MEW GULL AT SAYLORVILLE RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE

At 3:42 p.m. on 20 December 1993, I observed an adult Mew Gull (*Larus canus*) on the jetty of the Lakeview Recreation Area at Saylorville Reservoir in Polk County. The bird was in the company of about 100 gulls, mostly Ring-billed and Herring gulls, that were resting and feeding around the jetty. The bird remained on the jetty until 4:53 p.m., when it flew northeast over the lake to roost with other gulls on the open water.



The following description of the bird was written with the bird under direct observation. The most striking features were the small, slender bill, dove-like head shape, and darker mantle and upperwings. The bird was slightly smaller than the Ring-billed Gulls surrounding it, but not nearly as bulky. Its longer-winged appearance gave it a much slimmer look. The bill was very close to half the length of that of a Ring-billed Gull, and slightly slimmer. The bill was entirely yellow, lacking a ring or other markings, and appeared more pointed than the bill of a Ring-billed Gull. The head shape was also distinct, resembling that of a dove. This was further accentuated by the eye which seemed proportionately large when compared to the eye of a Ring-billed Gull. The eye appeared dark. The head was white with prominent brown markings, most noticeably across the nape. There was also a dark area surrounding the eye. The tail and underparts were also white. The upperwings and mantle were dark gray, a shade darker than those of a Ring-billed or Herring Gull. The outer two primaries (numbers 9-10) were mostly black, with large mirrors evident near the tips. In flight, the minimal amount of black on the remaining primaries (roughly numbers 5-8), the large amount of white color separating the gray upperwing from the black color in those primaries, and the broad white trailing edge to the wing were visible. The underwing was mostly white, except that the black primaries were visible on the underside of the wing. The legs were dull yellow-green and appeared duller than the legs of a Ring-billed Gull. The wing pattern, white tail, and yellow bill were all characters of an adult in basic (third-basic) plumage.

There are two subspecies of Mew Gulls that occur regularly in the Lower 48 states. The North American subspecies *L. c. brachyrhynchus* breeds in northwestern Canada and Alaska and is a widespread winter resident along the West Coast. In cases where subspecies has been mentioned, most, if not all, records of vagrant Mew Gulls in the interior U.S. appear to belong to this subspecies. The European subspecies *L. c. canus* occurs as a vagrant along the Atlantic Coast south to North Carolina. Adults are most easily separated by the amount of white in the primaries, with *canus* having the white color restricted to large white mirrors on the outer two primaries. *Brachyrhynchus* has much more white in the primaries, especially the divide between gray and black on the middle primaries [see Grant (1986), Tove (1993)]. The bird in question appeared to have too much white in the wingtip for *canus*. Furthermore, *canus* often shows a clear, dusky subterminal ring on the bill in basic plumage (Tove 1993), a feature this bird lacked.

This represents the third record of a Mew Gull in Iowa. The first record was of a second-basic *brachyrhynchus* from 16-31 December 1982 at Davenport (Kent 1983). The second record was of a first-basic bird, thought to be *canus*, on 19 December 1993 at Red Rock Reservoir (Johnson 1995). This species may be overlooked as a

regular late fall migrant in Iowa. Records in the upper Midwest are on the increase, and at least a couple are found each year around the Great Lakes.

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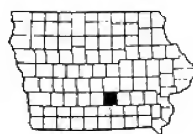
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4024 Arkansas Dr. Ames, IA 50014

### ANOTHER MEW GULL AT RED ROCK RESERVOIR

STEPHEN J. DINSMORE AND JIM SINCLAIR

At 7 a.m. on 11 December 1994, Dinsmore arrived below the dam of Red Rock Reservoir in Marion County. At 7:20 a.m., he noticed a smaller gull that was similar to the first-basic Ring-billed Gulls. The bird was roughly the size of a Ring-billed Gull with an overall dark coloration. The bird had a dainty appearance, an entirely dark uppertail, and looked small-billed and large-eyed. He concluded the bird was a first-basic Mew Gull of the nominate North American race *brachyrhynchus*. Jim Sinclair arrived shortly and we studied the bird until 8:30 a.m.



The following is a description of the bird. It was slightly smaller than a Ring-billed Gull, and appeared slimmer-winged in flight. The mantle was dark gray with some brown mottling. The wing coverts were dark brown and the primaries were black. Mantle color was a shade darker than that of an adult Ring-billed Gull. The collar and crown were washed with brown. The forehead and throat were white. The remainder of underparts were washed with pale brown (darkest across belly). The vent was pale and mottled with dark brown. The legs were dull pink. The head was dainty and dove-like, perhaps accentuated by the round forehead and small bill. The eye was dark and appeared large compared to that of a Ring-billed Gull. The bill was very short, thin, and bicolored: distal half dark, becoming pale pink near base. The wingtips extended well beyond the tail tip when perched. Upperwing pattern was as follows: outer primaries and their coverts blackish, inner primary coverts dark with a paler "window" on inner primaries, tips of inner primaries dark, secondary coverts pale brown and lighter than primary coverts, tips of secondaries dark brown, forming a dark bar along trailing edge of wing. The rump was pale brown with darker barring. The upper surfaces of the rectrices were entirely dark brown. The flight of this bird was much more buoyant than that of a Ring-billed Gull. Based on these features, we aged the bird as first-basic. The tail and wing patterns, generally darker coloration, large eye, and smaller bill all eliminate first-basic Ring-billed Gull. Identification to subspecies was based on tail pattern and more extensive dark color on head and underparts.

The bird was reportedly present through 1 January 1995, although we looked for but did not observe the bird after 17 December 1994. This represents the fourth



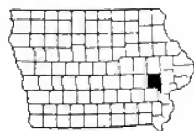
record of a Mew Gull in Iowa. All of the birds have occurred in December, suggesting this species may be overlooked as a late fall migrant in the state. First-basic birds should occur as often as adults, but may be overlooked because of their similarity to first-basic Ring-billed Gulls.

4024 Arkansas Dr., Ames, IA 50014, and 810 North B St., Indianola, IA 50125

## PRAIRIE WARBLERS NESTING IN JOHNSON COUNTY

CHRIS EDWARDS

On the morning of 8 July 1995 at Lake Macbride State Park in Johnson County I saw a pair of adult Prairie Warblers feeding four recently-fledged young. The habitat was a large brushy hillside with many shrubs and small deciduous trees. I had previously seen an adult male Prairie Warbler at this location on 17 May 1995 and 5 June 1995. The male and at least one juvenile were still present on 15 July 1995 but were not found on subsequent visits.



The male was easily recognized by its bright yellow face and underparts, black eye stripe, mustachial stripe, and streaked sides, and chestnut streaks on an olive-green back. The female was slightly duller colored with gray facial stripes and streaks on its sides, and fainter chestnut streaking on the back. The juveniles had a light gray head and throat, and an olive-green back. The breast and upper belly were light yellow fading to white on the lower belly, with a few faint gray streaks on the sides. The upperside of the wings and tail were gray, and the underside of the tail was white with narrow black edging. The juveniles appeared to be the same size as the adults.

I observed the adults and young interacting for 90 minutes. While the fledglings awkwardly hopped among the branches of small shrubs and occasionally flew short distances, the adults made frequent feeding trips and rested only briefly. The male foraged primarily in trees and shrubs while the female most often foraged near the ground. They occasionally hovered and gleaned insects from the tips of branches. Several types of insects, including green caterpillars, were fed to the young. The juveniles gave continual sharp call notes which became louder and more frequent as the adults approached with food.

The male sang a typical ascending buzzy "zee-zee-zee" song infrequently, and on two occasions was heard singing other songs. On 17 May it repeatedly sang "witchety-witchety-witchety" similar to a Common Yellowthroat. On 15 July it repeatedly sang a high, thin song similar to an American Redstart. Both Common Yellowthroats and American Redstarts were present at the location. On one occasion the male was seen chasing a Blue-winged Warbler.

This is the first confirmed nesting of Prairie Warbler in Iowa, but there is a record of a nest with eggs found in Lee County on 5 June 1886 (P. A. DuMont, *Wilson Bulletin* 47:205-208, 1935) which was judged as probable by the Records Committee. The Prairie Warbler is a rare summer resident in the state. There are a few unconfirmed reports prior to 1977, but it has been reported in all except two years since then, mostly from Lee, Johnson, and Allamakee counties. Iowa is at the western edge of the Prairie Warbler's summer range. Thanks to Tom Kent for his help with this note.

85 Whitman Avenue, North Liberty, IA 52317

# I.O.U. BUSINESS

## FALL BUSINESS MEETING

*Dixon, 9 September, 1995, 3:30 P.M.*

CAROL THOMPSON, PRESIDING, MARY KUHLMAN, SECRETARY

On behalf of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, Thompson thanked Bob Bryant of the Wapsi River Environmental Education Center and the Quad City Audubon Society for hosting the meeting. Minutes of the spring business meeting were distributed. It was moved (Gode, seconded by Zaletel) that the minutes be approved. Motion carried.

The treasurer's report was distributed. It showed an excess of support and revenues over expenses of \$798.84. Pam Allen encouraged members to take part in the adopt-a-book program. Membership brochures and I.O.U. materials were available for sale.

### Committee Reports

Records: This committee will meet in October, and their report will be in the next issue of *Iowa Bird Life*.

Membership: Ann Johnson reported that membership brochures will be sent to feeder survey participants. About 10% joined last year. In other public relations efforts, radio and TV stations have been contacted and an Internet page is being developed. Beth Brown, Maridel Jackson and Curt Nelson have been nominated to serve on this committee.

Publications: John Fleckenstein reported that this committee has not met. He commended the editors, Jim Dinsmore, and Hank and Linda Zaletel. Dinsmore reported that the third issue of *Iowa Bird Life* will be published in October and the fourth issue will be in December. The December issue will include the new checklist and the five-year index. Zaletel reported that letters to the editor can be submitted to him.

Library-Historical: No report. The Board will discuss the future of this committee.

Big Day: No report. The Board will check on the work of this committee.

Spring Count: Pete Petersen reported that 13 counties participated in 1995 with 230 species counted. The results are reported nationally. The date for the next count is 8 May 1996.

Educational: Hank Zaletel reported that work continues on updating the educational booklet.

Breeding Bird Atlas: Carol Thompson reported that all species accounts are at the press. Publication may be in 1997. John Fleckenstein thanked all who submitted photos.

Field Trips: Ann Johnson reported that the next trip is 2 December to northeastern Iowa. Details will be in the newsletter. The membership committee will issue a press release.

### Old Business

Publication committee members have been approved by the board. Dan Dorrance will serve through 1999 and Ann Barker will serve through 1998.

Upcoming Meetings: The spring 1996 meeting will be in Burlington. Mason City is a possible site for the fall 1996 meeting. Spring 1997 is the tri-state meeting in Sioux City with Nebraska and South Dakota. It was moved (Hollis, seconded by Johnson) to continue with plans for the tri-state meeting. Motion passed.

Birdline: The Birdline continues to function well. It is also on America On Line.

Rick Hollis announced that the Iowa City Bird Club will no longer be prepare quizzes for our meetings. The Allens volunteered to take this over.

### New Business

Partners in Flight: Lisa Hemesath reported that she is planning to form a state group with the first meeting in late October or November. Interested organizations can have representatives on this group. It was moved (Hollis, seconded by Petersen) that the president appoint two representatives from the I.O.U. to attend. Motion passed. Thompson asked that interested members contact her.

It was suggested that the I.O.U. designate a C.B. channel. Gerald White will be asked to write an article for the newsletter about this.

### Announcements

Jim Dinsmore announced that the Iowa Wildlife Viewing Guide is at the printer and will be out soon. It will sell for \$8.95. Binocular logos will be going up at points of interest around the state soon. He also announced that the hunting season for Snow Geese has been split and extended. Increased populations and the risk of disease and habitat damage are the reasons for this change.

Dinsmore introduced two Iowa State students attending today. Members were encouraged to make younger members feel welcome. Sylvia Faust was introduced as the local student selected to attend the meeting as the guest of the I.O.U.

It was moved (Hollis, seconded by Brown) that an ad hoc committee be appointed to review environmental issues and advise the organization. Motion passed. Thompson commented that I.O.U. is increasingly being asked to lend support to environmental issues.

Pete Petersen, representing Quad City Audubon Society, thanked Bob Bryant for his help with the meeting at Wapsi River Environmental Education Center. He reminded members to sign up for Sunday morning field trips.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Dixon, 9 September 1995*

Present: Carol Thompson (presiding), Ann Barber, Mary Kuhlman, Bud Gode, Pam Allen, Beth Brown, Ann Johnson and John Fleckenstein.

It was moved (Johnson, seconded by Kuhlman) to approve Beth Brown, Maridel Jackson and Curt Nelson for terms on the membership committee. Motion passed.

## BOOK REVIEW

**Shadowbirds: A Quest for Rails** by William Burt. Lyons & Burford, New York, 1994, 172 pp., \$25.00. As bird enthusiasts, we pursue our favorite species from one season to the next, year after year. Rarely, however, do we follow them for two decades across half a continent into strange marshes during the middle of the night.

*Shadowbirds* by William Burt is such an account of one person's obsession with rails. Although Burt has sought out all the familiar rails, this book deals primarily with his quest for Black and Yellow rails. His search for Black Rail nests begins on the Connecticut River near the author's Old Lyme home where Judge John Clark found nests in 1884 and becomes fruitful at Elliott Island, a sparsely populated area on coastal Maryland, where the Black Rail still nests in brackish-water marshes.

Burt's pursuit of the Yellow Rail leads him to Benson County, North Dakota, and a search for the "Big Coulee" written about extensively by Reverend P.B. Peabody in the early 1900s. Peabody, who lived in Kansas, wrote for all the major bird journals of his day and traveled to North Dakota in search of Yellow Rails for more than 20 years. Two I.O.U. members were able to help Burt fill in details about this interesting oologist. Jean Braley of Shenandoah provided some personal recollections of Peabody from her childhood while Tex Sordahl of Decorah furnished a photograph of Peabody.

Bill Burt's forays for rails are great adventures. The book details the trials and tribulations of photographing birds that are nearly impossible to see, let alone capture on film. Eight superb color plates depict six rail species. As a bird photographer for the past 25 years, I consider them an extraordinary achievement.

Few writers so skillfully blend a mix of scientific information, old historical accounts, and current events. The text is extremely well written and captures ones attention like a fine mystery.--Carl Kurtz, 1562 Binford Avenue, St. Anthony, IA 50239

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